

An Apple a Day is an Important Start

Issue

How do you address obesity in adults? Pacific County, Washington needed to do something. With obesity rates in adults and adolescents climbing higher than the state average, the Pacific County Health District decided to try changing the behavior of some of the youngest in their county.

Intervention

Using funds from the 2007 Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant, the Pacific County Health District implemented the "Healthy Strides" program for pre-school to 2nd grade students. This program provided lessons on physical activity and nutrition, including:

- Making a food chart
- Tasting foods from different food groups
- Field trips to a grocery store
- Discussions about drinking water and how good nutrition affects the body

Impact

Over 600 students in three Pacific County school districts participated in "Healthy Strides." Teachers have reported that students are eating more fruits and vegetables at lunch, drinking less chocolate milk, and voting to have healthy snacks at parties instead of cookies and cupcakes.

Parents have also reported behavior changes in their children after going through "Healthy Strides." One parent said, "I think my son is more conscious of what healthy snacks are. He is eating more vegetables and less candy and sugar."

Changing eating habits will be an ongoing public health challenge. Yet implementing change at an early age has helped Pacific County see quick results in hundreds of children and encourage good habits for life, thanks in part to block grant funds.

County population*: 21,600

**Pacific County Public Health
and Human Services Department**
South Bend or Long Beach, Washington
<http://pacificcountyhealthdepartment.com>

